The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations
Fall 2018
August – December 2018

Digital Communications Platforms and Strategies
PSPR 6226.PR
3 Credits

Class Day:
Time – 7:10 – 9:40 PM
Class Location – Alexandria Graduate Education Center (AGEC)

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor:
   Geoff Livingston

Contact Information
Phone Number:
Email Address:
Office hours by appointment

Communication/Access
REVISE: Professor Livingston is available prior to class by appointment. Telephone appointments/updates are available on a mutually convenient basis.

Blackboard Site
A Blackboard course site will be set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructors and the students. Students can access the course site at https://blackboard.gwu.edu. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

Academic Integrity
All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as "cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity.

Support for Students with Disabilities
GW's Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Please notify your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class
If we experience some an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave here, we will meet at Whole Foods in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University's operating status: http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/.

Attendance Policy
Students are expected to attend and participate in all scheduled classes. If a student is unable to attend a class due to a work or personal conflict he/she should notify the professor before the scheduled date of the class. If a student is ill, students are requested to provide as much notice as possible before class or immediately after regarding the reason for the absence. Students are not able to make up class participation points for missed classes.

University policy on observance of religious holidays
In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: students.gwu.edu/accommodations-religious-holidays.

Out-of-Class Learning Expectations
Over the course of the semester, students should expect to spend at least 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class. Required reading for the class meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 7 hours (350 minutes) per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 hours preparing for class.

Course Evaluation

At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW's online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting any of the following:

Professor Lawrence Parnell
Director, Strategic Public Relations Program
lparnell@gwu.edu | 703-29- 4150

Dr. Jack Prostko
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development
College of Professional Studies
jackp@gwu.edu | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

THE COURSE

Strategic Public Relations Program Objectives

Upon the completion of the Masters in SPR or anyone of the three Graduate Certificate programs, , students will have obtained an enhanced understanding and skills in:

1. Fundamentals of effective, strategic communications;
2. Best practices for writing, media relations and strategic communications planning and implementation;
3. Leadership in communications on a sound ethical and financial basis;
4. Working with management and staff/vendors to develop and manage the implementation of effective communications strategies.

Graduate School Expectations

Students enrolled in a graduate program should take their academic responsibilities seriously and be prepared to meet the following expectations:

1. Utilize effective time management skills so as to complete and submit their assignments on their required due dates and times.
2. Have attained a mastery of written communication skills including proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and word usage.
3. Understand how to properly format in-text citations and references for resources and information integrated into their written assignments.

Course Description and Overview

This course is designed to be the introductory/overview course in the new Graduate Certificate in Digital Communications. Students not enrolled in the Graduate Certificate will be allowed to register for this course as an elective after all Certificate students are accounted for and enrolled. These admissions will be on a space available basis – at the instructor's discretion.

The course will examine the theories and approach to digital communications and review the major digital platforms utilized by companies, government agencies, non-profits and associations to accomplish their strategic communications goals and objectives. As such, it directly corresponds to Program Objectives 2 and 4, see above.

The class will provide active hands-on opportunities for students to become familiar with the major platforms and the tactics and techniques top organizations deploy to further their objectives. The class will be led by an adjunct with deep digital skills and experience and feature case studies, guest speakers and practical application of the skills and strategies in use at the leading edge of digital communications.

These include: (*tentative*)

- Fundamental graphic design skills such as designing a banner ad, producing graphics for Facebook or Twitter, and basic word-mark/branding design.
- Creative writing acumen such as headline drafting, ad copywriting, short-format messaging for social media, and pairing messages with graphics.
- Essential skills for calculating campaign metrics, processing these calculations and making decisions using the data.
- Producing a video suitable for posting and/or distribution to support communications campaign objectives
- Experience with WordPress or another content management system at a basic level, including the management/entry of content and formatting pages on a website which can include basic knowledge of simple HTML tags.

Course Learning Objectives
1. Become familiar with the leading digital and social media platforms and their application to Strategic Public Relations and Advocacy
2. Develop the ability to develop and implement complex multi-platform and multi-media strategic communications programs in a digital environment.
3. Enhance overall strategic communications skills by increasing competency with digital communications.
4. Become adept at evaluating digital communications success and ROI by using monitoring and analytical software more efficiently.

Course Requirements
This course will entail lectures, in class activities and projects, guest speakers and hands on demonstrations of the uses and options for digital communications to achieve your organization's or client's communications objectives.

Students will be expected to attend each class, participate in class discussions and activities and engage with peers in the classroom and on Black Board discussions periodically during the semester.

The Black Board sessions may entail discussions about digital communications strategy, items in the news or in problem solving exercises based on current events. Students will have individual and group assignments to complete as well as weekly reading of current research, textbooks or case studies of the creative and effective use of digital communications in PR and PA. Expert guest speakers will also be engaged to hear firsthand accounts of how local and national organizations are addressing digital communications challenges and opportunities.

The work in the class will be reflected and in concert with the three other classes in the Graduate Certificate and the skills built in this introductory class will be critical in succeeding in the two classes in the Spring semester – Media Relations in a Digital World and the Digital Communications Practicum class.

Assignments:
1) Self- assessment of digital skills and knowledge, (Week 1) - *5% of total grade*
2) Research paper #1 on the history and evolution of a major platform into a force for advocacy, activism or achieving major organizational objectives – *20% of grade*
3) Research paper #2 –topic TBD - *20% of grade*
4) Final Project – research and preparation of an in-depth Case study on the use of digital communications to accomplish organizational goals (e.g. fundraising, new product introductions; support of advocacy; manage an issue or a crisis or run successful political campaign) - *50% of grade*
5) Class participation and Black Board discussion - 5% of total grade

Evaluation and Grading

Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

Grade*		Grading Standard
A	94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.
A-	90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+	87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B	83-86	Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that although not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a "B" is viewed as unacceptable.
B-	80-82	You've completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+	77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C	73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C-	70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F	Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

*Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

Required Text and Learning Materials (*tentative*)

The New Rules of Marketing and PR: How to Use Social Media, Online Video, Mobile Applications, Blogs, News Releases, and Viral Marketing to Reach Buyers Directly

by David Meerman Scott

Marketing 4.0: Moving from Traditional to Digital

by Philip Kotler and Hermawan Kartajaya

Social Media and Public Relations: Eight New Practices for the PR Professional

by Deirdre K. Breakenridge

Tentative Course Calendar*
*TBD by instructor

Week 1 – **Course overview** – expectations, assignments and syllabus. In class activity to assess current level of comfort/facility with digital communications platforms, strategy and practice.

Week 2 – **Role of Digital Communications in Strategic Public Relat**ions e.g. Media relations; marketing communications/fundraising; crisis and issues management and advocacy campaigns.

Week 3 - **Platform Review and Analysis** – **Facebook**. Focus on business and advocacy uses of the platform utilizing historical case studies, current examples and future direction. In class activity.

Week 4 - **Platform review and analysis** – **Twitter**. Focus on the business and advocacy uses of the platform utilizing historical case studies, current examples and future direction. In class activity

Week 5 - **Platform review and anal**ysis –**Instagram**. Focus on the business and advocacy uses of the platform utilizing historical case studies, current examples and future direction. In class activity

Week 6 - **Platform review and analysis** – **Pinterest, Snapchat and others**. Focus on the business and advocacy uses of the platform utilizing historical case studies, current examples and future direction. In class activity.

Week 7 – Digital communications Strategies and Tactics for *Government agencies- Federal, state and local* – Guest speakers, case studies and hands-on analysis and activities.

Week 8 – Digital communications Strategies and Tactics for *Non-Profits and Associations -* Guest speakers, case studies and hands-on analysis and activities.

Week 9 - Digital communications Strategies and Tactics for *Corporations-* Guest speakers, case studies and hands-on analysis and activities.

Week 10 - Digital communications Strategies and Tactics for *Agencies and Consulting firms* - Guest speakers, case studies and hands-on analysis and activities

Week 11 – Groups formed and work begins on final project – Assignment: Case study on the use of one major platform in a specific setting – Government; Non-Profit/Association; Agency; or Corporate – to accpmplish a key, goal or manage an issus/crisis.

Week 12 – In class work on group projects and guest speakers/panel from some or all the settings noted above. Explore a "local field trip" to a DC area digital agency or department of a large organization for a tour and interaction with practioners.

Week 13 – Final projects reviewed and presented

Week 14 – Final projects reviewed and presented

Copyright Statement

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.